



Page 7



Page 11

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Page 8

Presidential centers unite to warn of fragile state of U.S. democracy

By GARY FIELDS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Concern for U.S. democracy amid deep national polarization has prompted the entities supporting 13 presidential libraries dating back to Herbert Hoover to call for a recommitment to the country's bedrock principles, including the rule of law and respecting a diversity of beliefs. The statement released Thursday, the first time the libraries have joined to make such a public declaration, said Americans have a strong interest in supporting democratic movements and human rights around the world because "free societies elsewhere contribute to our own security and prosperity here at home." "But that interest," it said, "is undermined when others see our own house in disarray." The joint message from presidential centers, foundations and institutes emphasized the need for compassion, tolerance and pluralism while urging Americans to respect democratic institutions and uphold secure and accessible elections.

Continued on Page 2



Luci Baines Johnson looks at the desk on May 16, 2023, on display at the LBJ Presidential Library, that President Lyndon B. Johnson sat at in the President's Room at the U.S. Capitol to sign the Voting Rights Act of 1965, on Aug. 6, 1965.

Associated Press

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Presidential centers unite to warn of fragile state of U.S. democracy



Visitors to the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum look upwards at a 360 degree video screen showing a video welcoming them to the center in Dallas, on May 1, 2013.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

The statement noted that "debate and disagreement" are central to democracy but also alluded to the coarsening of dialogue in the public arena during an era when officials and their families are receiving death threats. "Civility and respect in political discourse, whether in an election year or otherwise, are essential," it said. Most of the living former presidents have been sparing in giving their public opinions about the state of the nation as polls show that large swaths of Republicans still believe the lies perpetuated by former President Donald Trump and his allies that the 2020 presidential election was stolen. Trump, a Republican, also has lashed out at the justice system as he faces indictments in four criminal cases, including two related to his efforts to overturn the results of his reelection loss to Joe Biden, a Democrat.

Thursday's statement stopped short of calling out individuals, but it still marked one of the most

substantive acknowledgments that people associated with the nation's former presidents are worried about the country's trajectory.

"I think there's great concern about the state of our democracy at this time," said Mark Updegrove, president and CEO of the LBJ Foundation, which supports the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. "We don't have to go much farther than January 6 to realize that we are in a perilous state."

Efforts to suppress or weaken voter turnout are of special interest to the LBJ Foundation, Updegrove said, given that President Lyndon Johnson considered his signing of the Voting Rights Act his "proudest legislative accomplishment."

The bipartisan statement was signed by the Hoover Presidential Foundation, the Roosevelt Institute, the Truman Library Institute, the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, the LBJ Foundation, the Richard Nixon Foundation, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, the Carter Center, the Ronald Reagan Presidential

Foundation and Institute, the George & Barbara Bush Foundation, the Clinton Foundation, the George W. Bush Presidential Center and the Obama Foundation. Those organizations all support presidential libraries created under the Presidential Library Act of 1955, along with the Eisenhower Foundation.

The Eisenhower Foundation chose not to sign, and it said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press: "The Eisenhower Foundation has respectfully declined to sign this statement. It would be the first common statement that the presidential centers and foundations have ever issued as a group, but we have had no collective discussion about it, only an invitation to sign."

The foundation said each presidential entity had its own programs related to democracy.

The push for the joint statement was spearheaded by David Kramer, executive director of the George W. Bush Institute. Kramer said the former president "did see and signed off on this statement."

He said the effort was intended to send "a positive message reminding us of who we are and also reminding us that when we are in disarray, when we're at loggerheads, people overseas are also looking at us and wondering what's going on." He also said it was necessary to remind Americans that their democracy cannot be taken for granted.

He said the Bush Institute has hosted several events on elections, including one as part of a joint initiative with the other groups called More Perfect that featured Bill Gates, a member of the board of supervisors in Arizona's Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix. The county, its supervisors and its elections staff have been targeted repeatedly by election conspiracy theorists in recent years.

Gates and his family have been threatened by people who believe false allegations of election fraud.

"We wanted to remind people that those who oversee our elections are our fellow citizens," Kramer said. "Some of them told stories that are almost

heartbreaking about the threats they faced."

He said he hoped the joint statement would generate wide support, but he added: "It's hard to say whether it will or not in these polarized times."

Melissa Giller, chief marketing officer at the Ronald Reagan Foundation and Institute, said the decision to sign on was a quick one. The foundation was approached shortly after it launched a new effort, its Center on Public Civility in Washington, D.C. She said the statement represents "everything our center will stand for."

"We need to help put an end to the serious discord and division in our society," Giller said in an emailed response. "America is experiencing a decline in trust, social cohesion, and personal interaction."

Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser to former President Barack Obama who is now CEO of the Obama Foundation, said the former president supported the statement.

"This is a moment where we could all come together and show that democracy is not about partisan politics," she said. "It's about making our country strong, making our country more decent, more kind, more humane."

Jarrett said one of the foundation's priorities is trying to restore faith in the institutions that are the pillars of society. To do that has meant taking on disinformation and creating opportunity where "people believe that our democracy is on the up-and-up." She said Obama has led a democracy forum and is planning another later this year in Chicago.

"I think part of it is recognizing that we are very fragile right now," Jarrett said, citing the fact that "we didn't have a smooth orderly transition of power in the last election" along with people's mistrust of the court system and elected officials.

"The wheels on our democracy bus," she said, "feel a little wobbly right now." □

Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh predicts 'concrete steps soon' to address ethics concerns

By JULIE CARR SMYTH

Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh told a judicial conference on Thursday he hopes there will be "concrete steps soon" to address recent ethics concerns surrounding the court, but he stopped short of addressing calls for justices to institute an official code of conduct.

"We can increase confidence. We're working on that," Kavanaugh told the conference attended by judges, attorneys and other court personnel in Ohio. He said all nine justices recognize that public confidence in the court is important, particularly now.

Public trust in the court is at a 50-year low following a series of divisive rulings, including the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* federal abortion protections last year, and published reports about the justices' undisclosed paid trips and other ethical concerns.

"There's a storm around us in the political world and the world at large in Ameri-



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh gestures as he speaks at a judicial conference, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023, in Cleveland.

Associated Press

ca," Kavanaugh said. "We, as judges and the legal system, need to try to be a little more, I think, of the calm in the storm."

Justice Clarence Thomas acknowledged recently that he took three trips last year aboard a private plane owned by Repub-

lican megadonor Harlan Crow even as he rejected criticism over his failure to report trips in previous years.

Reporting by the investigative news site ProPublica also revealed that Justice Samuel Alito failed to disclose a private trip to Alas-

ka he took in 2008 that was paid for by two wealthy Republican donors, one of whom repeatedly had interests before the court.

The Associated Press also reported in July that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through

college visits over the past decade. The AP obtained thousands of pages of documents that showed how justices spanning the court's ideological divide lent the prestige of their positions to partisan activity by headlining speaking events with prominent politicians or to advance their own personal interests.

"My perspective is we're nine public servants who are hard-working and care a lot about the court and care a lot about the judiciary as a whole," Kavanaugh said. He added that he believes justices "respect the institution and want that respect for the institution to be shared by the American people, recognizing that people are going to disagree with our decisions."

Besides *Roe v. Wade*, Kavanaugh pointed to a series of lesser noticed rulings that featured unusual line-ups that "didn't follow some pattern" based on the political leanings of the justices' appointing presidents. □

Trump White House official Navarro convicted of contempt after defying House Jan. 6 subpoena

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trump White House official Peter Navarro was convicted Thursday of contempt of Congress charges for refusing to cooperate with a congressional investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The verdict came after a short trial for Navarro, who served as a White House trade adviser under President Donald Trump and later promoted the Republican's baseless claims of mass voter fraud in the 2020 election he lost. Navarro was the second Trump aide to face contempt of Congress charges after former White House adviser Steve Bannon. Ban-

non was convicted of two counts and was sentenced to four months behind bars, though he has been free pending appeal.

Judge Amit Mehta scheduled Navarro's sentencing for Jan. 12. He was convicted in Washington's federal courthouse of two misdemeanor counts of contempt of Congress, both punishable by up to a year behind bars. Defense attorney Stanley Woodward moved for a mistrial, saying that the jurors had taken an outdoor break near where protesters and media regularly gather outside the courthouse and came back with a verdict shortly after. Mehta did not immediately rule, but said he would consider written

arguments on the issue. Prosecutors said Navarro acted as if he were "above the law" when he defied a subpoena for documents and a deposition from the House Jan. 6 committee. A defense attorney argued Navarro didn't purposely ignore the House Jan. 6 Committee. Navarro instead told staffers to contact Trump about what might be protected by executive privilege, something that didn't happen, Woodward argued.

A judge has ruled the executive privilege argument isn't a defense against the charges, finding Navarro couldn't show that Trump had invoked it. But Woodward said prosecutors hadn't proven that Navar-

ro acted "willfully" or only out of loyalty to Trump.

"Do we know that his failure to comply beyond reasonable doubt wasn't the result of accident, inadvertence or mistake?" he said.

Prosecutors, though, said Navarro should have handed over what material he could and flagged any questions or documents believed to be protected under executive privilege. □



Former White House trade adviser Peter Navarro speaks to the media as he departs federal court, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

EPA staff slow to report health risks from lead-tainted Benton Harbor water, report states

BENTON HARBOR, Mich. (AP) — Health risks due to high lead levels in drinking water in a majority Black and impoverished Michigan city were not taken quickly to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency leadership, according to a report released Thursday. The EPA Office of Inspector General said staff monitoring the state's response to lead levels and compliance in Benton Harbor failed to "elevate" the issue of health risks to the city's residents, per an EPA policy that encourages staff to do so.

The issues met several EPA elevation policy criteria, including the appearance of a substantial threat to public health and that normal enforcement and compliance tools seemed unlikely to succeed in the short term, the report said. In October 2018, the state notified the Benton Harbor water system it had exceeded 15 parts per billion in water samples the federal threshold for taking action. Those levels stayed high. In



A lone resident of Benton Harbor, Mich., walks across Britain Street Friday, Oct. 22, 2021, near the city's water tower in Benton Harbor.

2021, activists ramped up pressure for more action, and state leaders responded as the lead issue attracted national attention. State officials promised to rapidly remove the city's lead pipes and instructed residents to switch to bottled water for basic needs like cooking and drinking. Lead, which can leach from aging pipes into

residential drinking water through taps, is a potent toxin that can damage the cardiovascular and reproductive systems. It is particularly harmful to children, causing lower IQ and behavioral problems. The EPA's 2016 Policy on Elevation of Critical Public Health Issues followed the lead-contaminated water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Flint,

which was under state-appointed managers, used the Flint River for water in 2014 and 2015, but the water wasn't treated the same as water previously supplied by a Detroit-area provider. As a result, lead leached throughout the pipe system. Benton Harbor is about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north-east of Chicago. Federal

auditors announced an investigation in February 2022 into how the government dealt with lead contamination of Benton Harbor drinking water. The probe followed a petition for federal help from groups that accused local and state governments of dragging their feet.

"Because the elevation policy was not used, the Office of the Administrator's senior-level team did not have an opportunity to assess and recommend steps for resolving elevated lead levels in the Benton Harbor water system," the report stated.

The EPA has disagreed with a recommendation that it determine how the policy can be more effective but did agree to develop and implement a strategy to help staff understand when and how to use the policy. Cyndi Roper, senior policy advocate with the Natural Resources Defense Council, called the response in Benton Harbor "another abject failure of the EPA to protect an environmental justice community." □

Associated Press

'Stop Cop City' activists arrested after chaining themselves to bulldozer near Atlanta

By **R.J. RICO** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Authorities arrested five activists, including two wearing clerical attire, who chained

themselves to a bulldozer Thursday to halt construction of an Atlanta-area police and firefighter training center that opponents call "Cop City."



Protesters gathered on Constitution Road at the site of Atlanta's proposed public safety training center, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023, in DeKalb County, Ga., after several protesters chained themselves to construction equipment in an effort to halt work.

Associated Press

The protest occurred as a larger group gathered behind a chain-link fence to deliver a mock "stop work order" against the project, saying it has destroyed a forest, polluted a nearby creek and violated the will of the people. In a statement, Atlanta police accused the five activists of trespassing and said the department is working with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to determine charges. Authorities did not release their names. The demonstration at the DeKalb County site, where construction has been happening off and on for months, occurred two days after Georgia officials announced that 61 people

were recently indicted on racketeering charges in connection with the "Stop Cop City" movement. Opponents fear the 85-acre (34-hectare) training center will lead to greater militarization of the police and that its construction will exacerbate environmental damage in a poor, majority-Black area. Supporters, including Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens, counter that the facility would replace inadequate training facilities and help address difficulties in hiring and retaining police officers. In the indictment, Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr said the movement is spearheaded by "mili-

tant anarchists" who have committed multiple acts of violence and vandalism, including setting a police car aflame during a downtown Atlanta protest in January and torching construction equipment in March. In a news conference Tuesday, Carr said: "The individuals who have been charged are charged with violent acts." But some have not been accused of taking part in any violence, including three leaders of a bail fund who face money laundering charges in connection with food reimbursements, as well as three others who have been accused of distributing anti-police flyers near a state trooper's home. □

Police comb the U.K. and put ports on alert for an escaped prison inmate awaiting terrorism trial

By PAN PYLAS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A former British soldier awaiting trial on terror charges who appears to have escaped from a London prison by strapping himself to the underside of a food delivery truck remained at large Thursday as police stepped up security checks across the United Kingdom amid concerns he may try to flee the country.

Opposition parties linked the escape to years of financial austerity, while Britain's Conservative government said an independent investigation will take place "in due course" into how Daniel Abed Khalife managed to slip out of the medium-security Wandsworth Prison, which opened in 1851 during the reign of Queen Victoria.

His escape has prompted extra security checks at major transport hubs, particularly in and around the Port of Dover, the main boat crossing from England



Undated handout photo issued by the Metropolitan Police of Daniel Abed Khalife, 21, who went missing from HMP Wandsworth on Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023, shortly before 8am, where he was being held awaiting trial for terror offences and alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act.

Associated Press

to France. Britain's justice secretary told lawmakers that "no stone must be left unturned in getting to

the bottom of what happened" as he confirmed an "independent investigation into this incident." Alex Chalk also said "urgent" reviews into prison categorization would be carried out as questions remained over how Khalife wasn't being held at a maximum-security facility such as Belmarsh Prison in east London.

Khalife, 21, is accused of planting fake bombs at a military base and of violating Britain's Official Secrets Act by gathering information "that could be useful to an enemy." He was discharged from the British army after his arrest earlier this year and had denied the allegations. His trial is set for November.

Chalk said Khalife, who had been working in a kitchen at the prison, escaped at around 7:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning, when a vehicle that had made a delivery left.

Shortly afterward, he said, contingency plans for an unaccounted prisoner

were activated and police were informed. The vehicle, he added, was subsequently stopped and searched by police after the alert was raised.

"Strapping was found underneath the vehicle which appeared to indicate that Daniel Khalife may have held onto the underside of it in order to escape," Chalk said.

More than 150 investigators and police staff are on the case, according to Metropolitan Police Commander Dominic Murphy, who is the lead investigator.

"We have issued a nationwide alert that has resulted in increased security at our ports and borders, however currently there have not been any confirmed sightings," he said.

Opposition politicians have sought to pin the blame on the Conservative government, which has been in power since 2010. Many U.K. prisons, including Wandsworth, are over capacity and short of staff. □

Canada announces public inquiry into whether China, Russia and others interfered in elections

By ROB GILLIES

Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canada announced Wednesday that a judge would lead a public inquiry into whether China, Russia and other countries interfered in Canadian federal elections in 2019 and 2021 that re-elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals.

Opposition Conservative lawmakers have demanded a full public inquiry into alleged Chinese interference since reports surfaced earlier this year citing intelligence sources saying China worked to support the Liberals and to defeat Conservative politicians considered unfriendly to Beijing.

The opposition New Democrat party later pushed to expand any inquiry to include Russia, Iran and In-

dia.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc said Thursday that Quebec Court of Appeal Justice Marie-Josée Hogue would lead the broad-ranging inquiry and that her appointment had the support of opposition parties.

"Foreign interference in Canadian democratic institutions is unacceptable," LeBlanc said. "China is not the only foreign actor that seeks to undermine democratic institutions in Canada or other Western democracies. This challenge is not unique to Canada." A Trudeau appointee earlier this year had rejected holding a public inquiry into the leaked intelligence on alleged China interference, drawing allegations of a cover-up from the Conservative opposition. That

appointee, former Governor General David Johnston, stepped down from his role in June, citing the highly partisan atmosphere around his work.

The government then indicated it was open to calling a possible public inquiry, and invited all parties into talks over the summer on the shape of such an inquiry.

LeBlanc, who is also the minister for democratic institutions, said the inquiry will study allegations related to China, Russia, Iran and India linked to the 2019 and 2021 federal elections and report by the end of next year. He said the inquiry will also examine the flow of foreign-interference assessments to senior government decision makers. Earlier this year, Canada expelled a Chinese dip-

lomat whom Canada's spy agency alleged was involved in a plot to intimidate an opposition Conservative lawmaker and his relatives in Hong Kong after

the Conservative lawmaker criticized Beijing's human rights record. China then announced the expulsion of a Canadian diplomat in retaliation this month. □



Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs Dominic LeBlanc speaks at a news conference on the appointment of Quebec Court of Appeal judge Marie-Josée Hogue for the inquiry into foreign interference, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, on Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023.

Associated Press

Mexican Supreme Court's abortion decision expands access to millions

By **FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ** and **MEGAN JANETSKY**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The decision by Mexico's Supreme Court to invalidate all federal criminal penalties for abortion opened access for millions of people in the sprawling public health system a year after the court's U.S. counterpart went in the opposite direction.

Under Mexico's legal system, however, the ruling did not invalidate all criminal penalties for abortion, which remained on the books Thursday in 20 of Mexico's 32 states.

Those differences help explain why Wednesday's ruling, while a dramatic change in this predominantly Catholic nation, was not *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling guaranteeing women's access to abortion.

The ruling does mean that government health providers will not need to worry about federal penalties for abortion, because the court ruled that they were an unconstitutional viola-



A woman holds a banner reading in Spanish, "Legal, safe, and free abortion" as abortion rights protesters demonstrate in front of the National Congress on the "Day for Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean," in Mexico City, Sept. 28, 2020

Associated Press

tion of women's human rights.

Millions of Mexican women receive health-care services from the national government, granting the ruling immediate impact. The ruling also gave abortion rights advocates a powerful tool that they can use

to continue their state-by-state work of challenging abortion restrictions.

However, along with those restrictions still on the books in many states, many millions of Mexican women work outside the formal economy, placing them outside those quickly af-

fected by Wednesday's ruling.

Abortions are not widely prosecuted as a crime in Mexico, but many doctors refuse to provide them, citing the law.

Celebration of the ruling spilled out onto social media.

"Today is a day of victory and justice for Mexican women!" Mexico's National Institute for Women wrote in a message on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. The government organization called the decision a "big step" toward gender equality.

Sen. Olga Sánchez Cordero, a former Supreme Court justice, said on X that the ruling represented an advance toward "a more just society in which the rights of all are respected."

But others in Mexico decried the decision. Irma Barrientos, director of the Civil Association for the Rights of the Conceived, said opponents will continue the fight against expanded abortion access.

"We're not going to stop," Barrientos said. "Let's remember what happened in the United States. After 40 years, the Supreme Court reversed its abortion decision, and we're not going to stop until Mexico guarantees the right to life from the moment of conception." □

Palestinian leader's comments on Holocaust draw accusations of antisemitism from US and Europe

JERUSALEM (AP) — The United States, Germany and the European Union on Thursday condemned recent comments about

the Holocaust by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, accusing him of distorting history and promoting antisemitic stereotypes.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas speaks during a conference to support Jerusalem at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, on Feb. 12, 2023.

Associated Press

In a speech last month to senior members of his Fatah movement, Abbas said that Adolf Hitler killed European Jews not because of antisemitism, but because of their "social functions" in society, such as money lending. "These people were fought because of their social function related to money, usury," Abbas said in the speech. "From Hitler's point of view, they were sabotaging, and therefore he hated them." The speech was translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute, a think tank in Washington founded by Israeli analysts that translates speeches from Arabic and other languages for Western audiences. Critics have accused MEM-

RI of promoting a pro-Israel agenda.

In the Holocaust, 6 million Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their allies. Hitler considered the Jews to be an inferior race and viciously promoted antisemitic stereotypes to incite against Europe's Jews as the Third Reich carried out the genocide.

Deborah Lipstadt, the U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, said she was appalled by what she called Abbas' "hateful, antisemitic remarks." In a post on X, formerly called Twitter, she said Abbas had maligned the Jewish people and distorted the Holocaust. She called for an immediate apology.

Steffen Seibert, Germany's ambassador to Israel, said Abbas' speech was "an insult to the memory of millions of murdered men, women and children."

"The Palestinians deserve to hear the historical truth from their leader, not such distortions," he added.

In a statement, the European Union said the comments "trivialize the Holocaust and thereby fuel antisemitism."

Dani Dayan, the chairman of Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, accused Abbas of Holocaust denial and distortion and promoting antisemitic stereotypes. "These reprehensible remarks must be unequivocally condemned by global leaders," he tweeted. □

Visit the island's hidden natural pools



(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two “hidden” natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known “Cura di Turtuga (Turtle’s Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you’re up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to

enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you’ve completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely



no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It’s also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural pool that is hidden there. Because it’s still so new, there is no official name for it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also become a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won’t be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where wild northern waves crash into each other.

Sounds scary, but if you look down on your right, you’ll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder. □

Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours

Aruban legends: Frenchman’s Pass

(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman’s Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman’s pass (known to locals as “Franse Pas”) remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman’s pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous set-

tlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman’s Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to

hitchhike, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn’t think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn’t dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the



man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn’t some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: “Look,

there’s the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!”

French man’s pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass contributes a lot to our culture of folkloric story-telling.

Source: visitaruba.com

Papillon: The butterfly effect of magnificent food



PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. As our special guest you can choose to dine inside our heartwarming airconditioned restaurant or we also offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with great ambiance of the surroundings. Perfect setting for an enjoyable time people watching while sipping on a delicious cocktail.

Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual, then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Let the music play!

Another reason to visit us is our Live Entertain-

ment Schedule all through the week.

Get all cozy and warmed up on Sundays and Mondays by Marisella and her enchanting acoustic tunes accompanied by percussion only.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Jairo will give you a real Saxophone treat while on Wednesday you can sit back, relax and enjoy your dinner while DJ Jason brings you the most smooth jazz and lounge music for a dreamy night.

The musicians interact with the guests & requests can be sent in.

The live tunes definitely add to the experience.

Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too”. What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit



to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Chef's Garden 6 course dinner by Papillon

Our one of a kind executive chef Juan Ludena gets extra creative outside the kitchen of Papillon Restaurant. Serving a 6 course surprise menu featuring his International flavors and creativity with refined dishes, chef Juan Ludena is determined to give you a night to remember. Wine pairing is optional. The chef's secret garden is located in a local replica of the Aruba traditional ‘cunucu’ house. The tropical garden is the setting for a magical in-home private dining experience.

For more information about this magnificent option, please send us an email or ask our wait staff.

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

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The Aruba Tourism Authority honor loyal visitors on the island

Recently, Ms. Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure to honor a Loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba as Distinguished Visitors at their home away from home.

The honorees:

Melissa Schmitt from New York
Laura Piucci from New York
Xavier Piucci from New York

The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba

between 10-20-35 and more consecutive years.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger thanked them for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years together with the members of Marriott Ocean Club.

Top reasons for returning provided by the honorees were:

Spending time with family, friendliness of the people and the beautiful beaches. □



Look forward to Retrograde Ritual at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino

Yoga Instructor, Maria Pucci from Topfit, will lead two Retrograde Ritual sessions, at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino, on September 8th and September 15th, 2023.

Taking place at the edge of the water on Eforea beach, the Retrograde Ritual promises to deliver a mindful meditation, which will surely result in reduced

stress, anxiety and rest for a wandering mind. Both events are open to resort guests, tourists and locals at no charge and no reservation is needed.

The guided meditation starts at 6:30 pm and includes a Tibetan sound healing experience, to help attendees further alleviate their mood and lighten their mental burdens.

Maria Pucci from Topfit conducts the sessions each time the planet Mercury enters retrograde, which occurs three times in 2023, April, September and December. According to the age-old practice of astrology, Mercury's retrograde motion is believed to affect and influence our wellbeing.

What to expect: Complimentary



mentary Yoga mat, water and towels are available to all attendees. Guests may select their spot in the sand, get comfortable and fol-

low Maria's soothing voice and guided imagery into a state of transcendence and calm. □



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Episodio XLVIII - 48: Evil eye bean or Bonchi Hojada

ORANJESTAD — The difference between *Ormosia coccinea* (known as 'Huayruru') and *Abrus precatorius*, known in Aruba as 'Bonchi Hojada', is that *Ormosia coccinea* or huayruru is the largest seed in the graph and *Abrus precatorius* or bonchi hojada is the little one.

The Huayruru seeds are used for newborn babies and young children as amulets as a protection against bad spirits. They are put around their hands since they are unable to remove them and take them to their mouth. As soon as they begin to grow these are removed and stored in a place outside their reach. Huayruru seeds used on the body are harmless and do not cause contact poisoning or proven allergies.

Ormosia coccinea is a plant that grows throughout South Eastern North American countries, and all throughout South America. It produces beautiful red seeds with one black spot covering one-third of its surface. These seeds are used for jewelry and other deco-



rative purposes. The seeds are poisonous if eaten.

The seeds are known as Wayruru. Aymara also spelled huayruru, huayruru, in Peru where villagers believe them to be powerful good luck charms and nene or chumico in Costa Rica. A name also known in the French American colonies is panacoco, but this more often applies to *Swartzia tomentosa*, an-

other plant carrying these kinds of red and black seed.

If you are concerned regarding origin, you can may take them to an ethnobiologist for verification. If you believe your seeds are *Ormosia coccinea* you have been given a good luck charm with no ill intention, as long as you don't eat your good luck charm seeds (warn others and keep away from the kids or your pets). The research seems to suggest they are just beautiful adornments.

Aruba has its *Abrus precatorius* or Bonchi Hojada.

Abrus precatorius is a vine native to India and other tropical and subtropical areas of the world, it is a slender, perennial climber with long, pinnate-leafleted leaves that twines around trees, shrubs, and hedges. Since introduction to Florida and the Caribbean, it is now commonly found throughout these areas and in the southern United States. It is known by a va-

riety of names, including jequirity bean, rosary pea, and prayer bead, crab's eye, and love bean. The vine has pods with oval seeds and a hard glossy shell. The seeds vary in color, from red, black, orange or white with black and white centers). While all parts of the plant are toxic, the highest concentrations are found in the seeds. Due to their appearance, the seeds are often used for jewelry, beadwork and ornaments.

Abrus precatorius is a poisonous plant which contains one of the most lethal toxins, Abrin, a toxalbumin that inhibits protein synthesis causing cell death. The seeds are crushed and taken orally for suicidal purpose. There is no antidote for this poisoning.

If you believe your seeds are from *Abrus precatorius*, wrap them WITHOUT TOUCHING. Label them and add poisonous do not to touch or eat. Don't leave them lying around to sort another day. The Rosary pea is very aesthetically pleasing, and for this reason it is made into jewelry by various cultures. Unfortunately some jewelry makers have died by pricking their fingers during this process. Yup, the rosary pea is probably the world's most toxic seed. While intact, the seeds are mostly harmless (if I can use that word), but once the outer coating is scratched or the seed is crushed, as little as 0.1-1 µg/kg can kill a human.

Abrus precatorius causes total bodily system shut down. For this reason, the collection needed warning labels, labelled them with easy to see toxic warning stickers and have written a safety data sheet on how to handle them (never without gloves and avoid touching your face!)

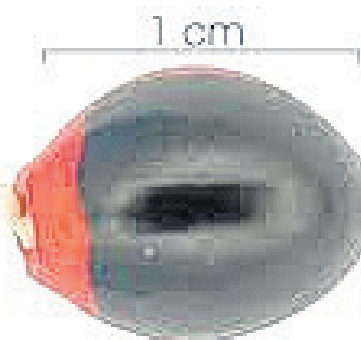
While these beans do contain a poison, it is extremely unlikely that an individual would chew through the hard shell of the seed and ingest the Abrin. Jequirity beans are not particularly harmful in their natural state and the seeds are not

expected to cause serious problems if swallowed whole and not chewed.

There have been no reported cases of poisonings from the bracelets but ingestion of any quantity of chewed, crushed or drilled (e.g. from a necklace) beans should be regarded serious and anyone who is suspected of ingesting them should seek medical advice immediately.

If you think you are in possession of the jequirity bean bracelets it is recommended that your return them to the supplier. If this is not possible then you should bag the bracelets and dispose of through normal household waste. In line with good hand hygiene practices, and as an additional precaution, you should also wash your hands and avoid touching your eyes after bagging.

To get to know more about Aruba and its origins, its animals and culture, we highly recommend you to book your visit of our renowned cultural encounter session which has been entertaining curious participants for decades. Mail us at etnianaativa03@gmail.com to confirm your participation. Our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels. □



Did you know about...?

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called *Did you know about...?*, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is *placa*. Cents are called *cen* (pronounced: *seng*), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called *Dos placa*; 10-cent coins were called *debchi*; 25-cent coins were called *diez placa* and the 50-cent coin was once called *Yotin* (pronounced: *jo-teen*). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called *placa too*. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.



Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank

of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs

that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a *Turtuga blanco* (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called *Shoshoro*. The birds *Trupiaal*, *Shoco*, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a *Purun di ceramica* (clay pot), in

reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the *Cododo* (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), *Can-greu di tera* (land crab), *Willem III Tower*, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called *Banana di rif*. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the *Yuwana* (iguana), *Aloe*, *Toteki* (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the *Baile di cinta* (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the *Dornasol* and the *Warawara*—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the *Tuna cactus* plant, and the *Caha di orgel* (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

the word "florin" supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.

Source: *Placa, placa, placa* by the National Library of Aruba



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Indy

1 Ship staffs entrant

6 Stares 44 Fra-
stupidly grance

11 Bothered 45 Garden

12 Seize by starters
force

13 Home
style

14 Fall sign

15 Lobed
organ

16 Strike
caller

18 Bar
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19 Employ

20 "— Boot"

21 Road-
house

22 Long-
winged
seabird

24 Play parts

25 Ottoman
rulers

27 Bearing

29 Comes in

32 Hockey's
Bobby

33 Braying
beast

34 Scoundrel

35 Fall mo.

36 Detective
Archer

37 Compete

38 Cartoon
genre

40 Hirsch of
"Milk"

42 Kitchen
gadget

A	P	H	I	D	J	A	D	E	D
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Yesterday's answer

DOWN

1 Invented

2 Relaxed

3 Presi-
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protectors

4 Eastern
"way"

5 Fruit-filled
pastry

6 Swallows

7 "Do —
say!"

8 Point of
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9 Wander-
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10 Gives
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17 Blue-gray
cat

23 Use the
track

24 Hill
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26 Replies

27 Elemen-
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39 Chess
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41 West of
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42					43				
44					45				

Q-R

AXYDIBAA XR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

9-8 CRYPTOQUOTE

O K L F L N R T O N W L U Q F

W T D N E C R H L L M K L R T E Y T

O N W L U Q F C Q N E C O Q Z L Y

— K Q W L F " Q Y X R R L X "

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: DO NOT LET WHAT YOU CANNOT DO INTERFERE WITH WHAT YOU CAN DO. — JOHN WOODEN

Victoria's Secret overhauls its racy fashion catwalk in its latest moves to be more inclusive

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For more

than 20 years, Victoria's Secret had bolstered its image built on a man's vision of sexiness with one big annual event: its fashion catwalk extravaganza, with supermodels like Naomi Campbell sashaying down the runway in Swarovski-crystal covered wings, thongs and million dollar fantasy bras.

Now, after a four-year hiatus, the lingerie brand came back Wednesday night with a complete overhaul that was part fashion event and part preview of a documentary-style film featuring 20 global creatives. It celebrated all different body shapes girth and all.

Top models like Winnie Harlow, who has vitiligo, a skin condition, showed up in some of the designs. The event also showcased the creators' looks on headless mannequins of all body types.

The Victoria's Secret World Tour, to be aired globally on Amazon Prime Video on Sept. 26, marks the company's biggest marketing investment in the past five years and its latest efforts to reverse its supercharged sexy image that left it irrelevant to many women, leading to several years of sales declines.

Those efforts include re-vamping its marketing to highlight fuller-figure women in ads and store mannequins, and expanding into mastectomy bras and comfy sports bras. It's also refreshing its stores with



Mannequins are shown at the Victoria's Secret store in New York on Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023.

Associated Press

brighter lights and blush pink walls. And it replaced its supermodel "Angels" with a group of 10 diverse women who have advised the brand and promoted it on social media.

"My motive to be here is that I have girls," said Brazilian supermodel Adriana Lima, a long-time Victoria's Secret Angel, on the red carpet. "Some of my girls want to be models so I feel that in this day, Victoria's Secret and other brands are embracing and celebrating women in their different stages. So that's a beautiful thing."

Campbell told The Associated Press that there are many girls who want to work and create for Victoria's Secret, "and now they will have the chance to." But Victoria's Secret faces an uphill battle, some experts say. While the brand is still the largest lingerie label by sales in the U.S., its market share has eroded to 18.7% last year from 31.2% in 2017, hurt by smaller rivals like American Eagle's Aerie

and other online startups that were inclusive from the get-go and offered more comfort, according to market researcher Euro-monitor International.

Last year, Victoria's Secret bought online rival Adore me for \$400 million in cash but the Reynoldsburg, Ohio-based company still delivered another quarter of sales drops for the period ended July 29. And it forecasts sales will continue to fall for the rest of the year.

Victoria's Secret CEO Martin Waters told analysts last week that turning around the business will take some time. "We recognize that neither our brand revolution nor our strategy will return the full potential overnight," Waters said. "We're on a journey. We also believe that there is a clear path to growth through the current turbulent environment and into the future."

It wasn't so long ago Victoria's Secret had a long unparalleled run of success. The brand was founded by the late Roy Larson Raymond in the late 1970s after he felt embarrassed about purchasing lingerie for his wife. Lex Wexner, the founder of the Limited Stores Inc. that was rebranded as L Brands in 2013, purchased Victoria's Secret in 1982 and turned it into a powerful retail force.

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AI that alters voice and imagery in political ads will require disclosure on Google and YouTube

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
AP Business Writer

Google will soon require that political ads using artificial intelligence be accompanied by a prominent disclosure if imagery or sounds have been synthetically altered.

AI-generated election ads on YouTube and other Google platforms that alter people or events must include a clear disclaimer located somewhere that users are likely to notice, the company said in an update to its political content policy.

The new rule starts in mid-November, just under a year before the U.S. presidential election. It will also affect campaign ads ahead of next year's elections in India, South Africa, the European Union and other regions where Google already has a verification process for election advertisers.

Though fake images, videos or audio clips are not new to political advertising, generative AI tools are making it easier to do, and more realistic. Some presidential campaigns in the 2024 race including that of Florida GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis already are using the technology.

The Republican National Committee in April released an entirely AI-generated ad meant to show the future of the United States if President Joe Biden is reelected. It employed fake but realistic photos showing boarded-up storefronts, armored military patrols in the streets, and waves of immigrants creating panic.

In June, DeSantis' campaign shared an attack ad against his GOP primary opponent Donald Trump that used AI-generated images of the former president hugging infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Last month the Federal Election Commission began a process to potentially regulate AI-generated deepfakes in political ads



The Google app icon is seen on a smartphone, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa. Associated Press

ahead of the 2024 election. Such deepfakes can include synthetic voice of political figures saying something they never said. Democratic U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, co-sponsor of pending legislation that would require disclaimers on deceptive AI-generated political ads, said in a statement that Google's announcement was a step in the right direction but "we can't solely rely on voluntary commitments." Several states also have discussed or passed legislation related to deepfake technology.

Google is not banning AI outright in political advertising. Exceptions to the ban include synthetic content altered or generated in a way that's inconsequential to the claims made in the ad. AI can also be used in editing techniques like image resizing, cropping, color, defect correction, or background edits.

The ban will apply to election ads on Google's own platforms, particularly YouTube, as well as third-party websites that are part of Google's ad display network. □



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Pinochet as a vampire in surreal, frightening 'El Conde'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

The Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet is not dead in Pablo Larraín's "El Conde." He is instead a 250-year-old vampire living in semi-exile and wishing for death in this audacious allegory about history's tendency to repeat itself, shot in sublime, otherworldly black and white.

It is fitting that the film, in theaters Friday and on Netflix Sept. 15, is being released around the 50-year anniversary of the Sept. 11, 1973 coup which brought Pinochet to power for almost 17 years. Pinochet's regime tortured, killed and disappeared 3,065 people in the name of fighting communism, but for some in Chile the legacy is now remembered as not all bad.

Evil ideas, Larraín cautions, have a tendency to live on, to mutate and to infect societies again and again even many years after they're supposedly dispelled and destroyed. Kind of like vampires living in stark, hellish exile as greedy heirs circulate to try to claim what's theirs and



This image released by Netflix shows a scene from "El Conde."

keep the money flowing. Larraín, the 47-year-old filmmaker behind "Spencer," "Jackie" and "No," has always considered himself a political filmmaker and has already gestured at Pinochet in previous films. In "El Conde," which he co-wrote, he uses "the language of satire and political farce" to show the world the true nature of a

dictator who "never faced true justice," he said in his director's statement. Pinochet stepped down in 1990 after Chileans voted against military rule, only to assume the role of commander-in-chief of the army and, later, the self-created position of lifelong senator until he resigned in 2002. He died in 2006 without being convicted in Chil-

ean courts. That he was not brought to justice is conceived in the film as placing the country in a kind of eternal limbo, doomed to continue suffering at the hands of the General and his disciples.

Jaime Vadell, who is a vibrant 87, plays Pinochet. He flies around Chile like an evil, aging superman, unsure if he wants to hunt

or starve himself of blood and let his clock run out. He is world weary but also prideful; He gets especially aggravated when it's suggested that he's a thief (murder, he was essentially fine with). Alfredo Castro is his devoted butler, who also hungers for blood. And Gloria Münchmeyer is composed and sinister as his string-wielding wife Lucía, trapped with their mid-age, lazy, entitled offspring as a pretty, young accountant/nun (Paula Luchsinger) attempts to take stock of the general's assets but also exorcise him.

Her character, who masks her shrewdness with a wide-eyed earnestness is styled and shot with nods to Renée Jeanne Falconetti in "The Passion of Joan of Arc."

"El Conde" is obviously not a history lesson, but information flies at you fast nonetheless. It could rival "His Girl Friday" in words per minute, which can be challenging to process in subtitles but this is where the Netflix of it all comes in handy the dialogue is so sharp, you don't want to miss a word. □

Associated Press

Lainey Wilson leads the 2023 Country Music Award nominations for the second year in a row

By **MARIA SHERMAN**
AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It's another landmark year for breakout country superstar Lainey Wilson, who tops the CMA Awards nominations for the second year in a row.

Wilson was a first-time nominee in 2022, which means she's made history in 2023 becoming the first and only artist to top the nominations list in her first two appearances on the ballot.

Last year, she claimed six nominations. This year, Wilson is up to nine, for album, song, music video, entertainer and female vocalist of the year, as well as two separate nominations in both the single of the year

category (for "Heart Like a Truck" and her contributions to HARDY's "wait in the truck") and the musical event of the year category (once again for "wait in the

truck" and her feature on Jelly Roll's "Save Me.") She now ties Merle Haggard and Miranda Lambert for scoring nine nominations in one year just be-



Lainey Wilson performs on day one of the Lollapalooza Music Festival on Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023, at Grant Park in Chicago.

Associated Press

hind Alan Jackson, who set the record at 10 nods in 2002. Wilson is followed by first-time nominee Jelly Roll, who boasts five nominations, and Luke Combs and HARDY, with four each.

But Combs or HARDY could take home six trophies, should they sweep their categories.

In addition to nominations in the entertainer and male vocalist of the year categories, Combs is the performer and a producer on his smash-hit cover of Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car," which is nominated in the single of the year category. He also performed and co-produced his latest release, "Gettin' Old," which is nominated for album of

the year. At the Country Music Awards, production credits are not counted as separate nominations, although they are factored into trophy counts.

It is a similar case for HARDY: The artist is nominated for "Wait in the Truck" in both the single and musical event of the year categories, a song he both performs and produced.

As for the other major categories: Chris Stapleton, Carrie Underwood, and Morgan Wallen round out the entertainer of the year nominees; Megan Moroney's "Tennessee Orange" and Jordan Davis' "Next Thing You Know" complete the song of the year category. □

The mental and physical tolls of the tennis season weigh on players by the US Open

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**

AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Novak Djokovic considers his mental state just as important as his physical condition when it comes to being prepared to play his best at age 36. "Mentally there is probably a lot more that I'm dealing with in my private life than was the case 10 years ago. But that's the beauty of life. Things are evolving, moving on," said Djokovic, who will try to take another step toward what would be a 24th Grand Slam title when he faces Ben Shelton in the U.S. Open semifinals Friday. "I just feel that there is always, I guess, an extra gear that you have inside of you and you can find when you dig deep to handle and manage energy levels, on and off the court," Djokovic said, "if you're really devoted to that and if you care about it, if you pay attention to that mental aspect as much as physical, of course."

By the time players arrive at Flushing Meadows for the last major tournament of a long season one that began in late December and will carry on into November the ailments and injuries that are part of any professional athlete's ex-



Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, reacts during a match against Taylor Fritz, of the United States, during the quarterfinals of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

istence can make things tough. Some competing at the U.S. Open, which concludes this weekend, say the wear and tear on the mind can be just as hard to deal with as whatever might be wrong with one's body.

"We're already smashed. Completely," said Daria Kasatkina, a 26-year-old from Russia who reached the fourth round in New York.

Stress comes from a variety of sources. The desire to

win each match, of course. The importance of earning, and defending, rankings points. The fact that there is no annual salary in a sport where every competitor is an independent contractor who needs to pay for travel expenses and, in most cases, a personal coach, physiotherapist and other members of their "team."

"At a Slam, tension is always there. A few days before it's starting, you're already feeling it. ... You have to ac-

cept it and, maybe even round by round, it's getting worse and worse," said Kasatkina, a 2022 French Open semifinalist. "It's part of the game. It's part of this show. And we're all in the same situation, all the players."

U.S. Davis Cup captain Bob Bryan, who won 16 Grand Slam doubles titles with his twin, Mike, recalls how that would set in for some in Flushing Meadows.

And he recalls how it could alter on-court perfor-

mance.

"There's times where you just get out there and mentally you just can't push because you're so exhausted. And you don't deal with the adversity well. Your thoughts turn negative and you're not opportunistic and optimistic on the court. And that will definitely affect your game," Bryan said. "There's a lot of players that never figured that out during their career. A lot of great champions and a lot of Hall of Famers ran out of gas here in New York."

Not everyone deals with mental fatigue or, if they do, acknowledges it.

"Physically, mentally, I feel ready," Aryna Sabalenka, who was scheduled to play Madison Keys in the semifinals Thursday night, said before the start of the U.S. Open.

"I feel motivated. I feel strong."

Professional athletes offering frank thoughts on mental health is still a relatively recent development. A tennis player, Naomi Osaka, was one of the first stars to come forward and discuss feelings of anxiety and depression, doing so after withdrawing from the 2021 French Open. □

Wingback Denzel Dumfries has three assists as Netherlands beats Greece 3-0

EINDHOVEN, Netherlands

(AP) — Denzel Dumfries had three first-half assists as the Netherlands beat Greece 3-0 on Thursday to move into second in European Championship qualifying Group B behind leader France.

The Inter Milan wingback first headed back a corner for midfielder Marten de Roon to fire in a low shot in the 17th minute for his first goal for the Netherlands in his 38th international.

Dumfries then provided the final pass in two flowing moves by the Netherlands. He sent a cross from the right to Liverpool forward

Cody Gakpo, who controlled the ball on his chest and volleyed past Greece goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos in the 31st minute at the Philips Stadium. To complete a dominant Dutch first half, Dumfries chipped a pass to center forward Wout Weghorst, who headed home from close range in the 39th for his first goal since March in any competition.

Manchester City defender Nathan Aké was substituted at halftime after appearing to hurt a hamstring late in the first half.

France maintained its perfect record in Group B by

beating Ireland 2-0.

With the match effectively killed off before the break, both teams played out a tame, goalless second half. Substitute Tijjani Reijnders forced Vlachodimos to make a save in the 83rd with a shot from just outside the penalty area.

The result leapfrogged the Netherlands over Greece. Both have six points, but Ronald Koeman's team has played one match fewer than Greece.

The Netherlands plays Ireland in Dublin on Sunday, when Greece takes on last-placed Gibraltar in Athens. □



Netherlands' Xavi Simons, top, out jumps Greece's Dimitris Kourbelis to head the ball during the Euro 2024 group B qualifying soccer match between Netherlands and Greece at Philips stadium in Eindhoven, Netherlands, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023.

Associated Press

The long road winding down at the World Cup, where semifinals await Team USA



U.S. guard Anthony Edwards (10) reacts after a dunk over Jordan center Ahmad Dwairi (44) during the first half of a Basketball World Cup group C match in Manila, Philippines Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023.

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

MANILA, Philippines (AP) —

This seemed so far away in the beginning. There was a week of training camp in Las Vegas for USA Basketball to get through, then a week in Spain, then a week in Abu Dhabi, the group stage of the World Cup, then the second round, then the quarterfinals. They've flown 14,000 miles, eaten more than 100 meals away from home, played 11 games, posed for countless photos.

All for this. The medal round at the Basketball World Cup is here.

The U.S. plays Germany on Friday night in the World Cup semifinals, with a berth in Sunday's gold-medal game awaiting the winner. It's a rematch of an exhibition from three weeks ago, when the U.S. rallied from 16 points down to win 99-91. Germany hasn't lost since and is the only team still unbeaten in this tournament.

"Everything that we've done in preparation for the

last five and a half weeks has been to get to this point," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "It's not like we're all of a sudden going to give them a Knute Rockne speech, even though none of them know who Knute Rockne was. But that speech wouldn't work anyway. Show them what we need to do, let them be themselves, that's the plan." So, no fire-and-brimstone speech like the ones the old Notre Dame football coach remains famous for are coming. None should be needed, not with this summer's ultimate goal — the World Cup title — so close, and with the knowledge that Germany will come into this game truly believing it can win. For good reason, too. Germany was better for long stretches of that exhibition game, then came unglued down the stretch. Anthony Edwards had 34 points, the U.S. pulled away with an 18-0 run, and that was barely enough to get the win.

"We're ready to get it

done," Edwards said before practice Thursday. "We're ready to try to get it done." Even though the U.S. is a heavy favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, nobody in the red, white and blue seems to be expecting a cakewalk.

The last four World Cup (or world championship, as it used to be called) winners have gone through the tournament undefeated: Spain in 2006, the U.S. in 2010 and 2014, Spain again in 2019. Germany is the only unbeaten team left in this tournament, now just two wins from what would be the biggest prize in its basketball history.

"It's crazy to be here, to be in the semifinals of the World Cup," Germany's Johannes Thiemann said. "I think it means a lot to the German basketball world. I think we were able last year to have a good run in the EuroBasket and now in the World Cup, I think that means a lot for our country."

There is familiarity with many of Germany's best

players. Toronto guard Dennis Schroder has been in the NBA for a decade, most recently with the Los Angeles Lakers. ("He's my guy," Schroder said of U.S. guard Austin Reaves, his former Lakers teammate. Countered Reaves: "I don't even like him," he said, very clearly joking.) U.S. forward Paolo Banchero is Orlando teammates with German brothers Franz and Moritz Wagner. U.S. guard Tyrese Haliburton is an Indiana teammate of German big man Daniel Theis. Banchero has given the U.S. coaches his thoughts on Franz Wagner, who has missed much of the World Cup with an ankle issue but played a huge role in his team's win Wednesday over Latvia in the quarterfinals.

"I'm sure he's done the same over there," Banchero said. "But anyway I can help, knowing him and his brother ... I'm not going to be too specific on it, but just some stuff that obviously I know about him. He's a great player. You're not go-

ing to be able to stop him, but just to slow him down." The U.S. is 6-0 all-time in major international tournaments — 3-0 in the Olympics, 3-0 in what's now called the World Cup — against Germany, with 25.5 points the average margin of victory in those games. The last of those wins was a 106-57 rout at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Friday won't be one of those games.

"This isn't a series where you can ease into it," U.S. captain and point guard Jalen Brunson said. "We've got to be ready to go. Great team over there that pushed us to our limits and we've got to be ready. We know they're going to be ready and we've got a lot of respect for them."

CANADA VS. SERBIA

No Jamal Murray for Canada this summer, no Nikola Jokic for Serbia either. Their national teams did just fine without the stars of the NBA champion Denver Nuggets.

The first semifinal on Friday has Canada, seeking its first trip to the gold-medal game, against a Serbia team trying to make its second trip to the finals in the last three World Cups. Both teams are 5-1 in the tournament.

Canada coach Jordi Fernandez said he has great respect for Serbia coach Svetislav Pesic, a FIBA Hall of Famer who guided the former Yugoslavia to the gold at the 2002 world championships (now the World Cup).

"Great coach, a great program, guys know what it is," Fernandez said. "They have a lot of FIBA experience, something that we lack. But we're getting this experience day by day."

Canada's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is averaging 25 points per game in the World Cup, by far the most of any player on a team in the medal round. Serbia leads all World Cup teams in field goal percentage (55%) and is giving up the third-fewest points per game. □

Associated Press